

Bulletin

of the

MARITIME LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

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MY FAVOURITE BOOKS

Mary Kinley Ingraham

The kindly editor has been good enough to ask me for a column on my favourite books. In the library stacks, where I walked up and down, back and forth, for upwards of twenty-seven years, and in the catalogues where with my staff I continually waged a war for order and arrangement, I seldom thought of favourite books. Yet all librarians in the absolute are individuals with affections and lusts, and I doubt if there is one who has not known often the joy of a book under the pillow that will be remembered for life.

The two favorite books of my early childhood were Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress and Samuel Johnson's Rasselas. I discovered these for myself soon after learning to read, and I have never found or tried to find a substitute for either. I read these with literal belief, sure that for me they foretold golden cities and happy valleys where I would find escape from the commonplace and disgraces of home and school. When I was about seven years old the Bible was to me a wondrous book, especially the Old Testament, with its stories of heroes, Adam, Noah, Abraham and Isaac, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers, Moses and Joshua.

A change from this strong literary diet came with a copy of Louis M. Alcott's Little Women and oh, the delight of it! Also, before I was twelve, I found Robinson Crusoe and a few cowboy stories. The danger of priggishness in reading was over forever, I trust, but once Scylla was past, Charybdis was close by. A girl in the public school began bringing me regularly passionate love stories, the most of them written by one Bertha M. Clay. At home I kept these hidden, like the nice child I was. What the sequel would have been I cannot say, but real harm, if there was any, was counteracted by reading Shakespeare from cover to cover. Remember, I was not giving myself a course in Shakespeare or being given one by somebody else; I had simply fallen upon a book that supplied good stories endlessly. Soon afterwards a term at a school where there was very little home work gave me a chance to read Dickens through. His books are still distinguished favorites, with those of Thackeray and George Eliot.

Wider vistas of reading opened when a late college course became possible, but there was no time then for desultory book fellowship. I once heard a college president claim that Herodotus was his favorite author in any language. I listened and envied him, but he was too near the gods for me to follow. I dare not claim favorites among classical authors.

During the years of librarianship 1917-1944, the job of at least having, knowing, talking about favorite books, might have had a place, but in the sterner stress it was crowded out or became a necessary function of my office. Through the years the routine of the library made little chance for the actual way of a good reader with a good book; the emphasis fell quite rightly on the United States Catalogue and the Readers' Guide. Yet even for dutiful librarians there are long winter evenings and now and then a splendid day in bed, with a sufficient temperature for the doctor's edict but not for the real discomfort of influenza, and these were the days for reading modern fiction. There one saw life as it is lived outside libraries and bookish homes, as it has been seen by Balzac and Dostoevsky, as it is seen and read today by Aldous Huxley, T.B. Costain, Thomas Raddall, Will Bird, Frank Slaughter, and uniquely by Thomas Mann. My own favorite author among these is Thomas Mann, my favorite book, his Joseph in Egypt.

(Mrs. Ingraham, formerly Librarian of Acadia University, Wolfville, and Honourary President of the M L A is now living with her brother in Livermore Falls, Maine. Ed.)

Book Review

Library Manual for the Schools of British Columbia. Province of British Columbia Department of Education. Division of Curriculum.

It's a rare thing in this wordy age to praise a book for its "sins of omission" but in these very "sins" lies one of the chief virtues of "The Library Manual for the Public Schools of B.C." Nowhere in the whole Manual are two words used where one is better; nowhere is clarity obscured by elaboration. In plain and simple language each part of complex subject is dealt with adequately neatly, sufficiently. If more writers did as well, we should be spare a fearful and wonderful spate of words.

As one who tries to produce not-too-bewildered teach-librarians in a short Summer School session, it has seemed necessary to me to find some book which could be relied upon to answer most questions that arise when the teachers begin to put principles into practice. The Manual contains more help and less digression than anything I have found. There are three parts to the text; 1. Organization and maintenance of library collections for both small and large schools, including ordering and preparation of books, reports, contacts, space and furniture. 2. Catalogue, circulation and use of the library 3. Dewey classification (simple) subject headings for catalogue, for vertical file and picture file. All the little vexing questions about filing are dealt with clearly and you find what you need immediately. One thing missing is a list of Canadian publishers, or where to get a list of publishers. The section on library activities will strike terror to the heart of the average busy teacher who is adding library work to her already full schedule, and at least it is good for such time as will come when the importance of library periods in school curriculums is fully recognized.

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Notes and Gleanings

Popular Children's Books

A study of the circulation of children's fiction in the Public Library, St. Paul, Minnesota, reported in "Illinois Libraries" October 1948, reveals that books of the last decade were well in the lead in popularity. The article lists the 100 books out of a junior fiction collection of 5200 that were read most often during a six months period. Of these 37 were books published since 1940 and 29 were books published from 1930-39. A number of books published before 1900 are still liked enough to be among the 100 favorites: they are the children's classics:

Alcott. Little women
 Jo's boys
 Old fashioned girl
 Clemens Adventures of Tom Sawyer
 Prince and the Pauper
 Lothrop Five little Peppers
 Stevenson Treasure Island
 Wyss Swiss Family Robinson

First published early in this century, L.M. Montgomery's Anne of Green Gables and Jack London's Call of the Wild earned a place on the list.

The book that "led all the rest" was Maud Hart Lovelace's Betsy-Tacy and five other of Mrs. Lovelace's books were listed. The author who had most books on the list was Augusta Huiell Seaman. 43 of the most popular books were written by 9 authors each of whom contributed 3 or more:

Seaman 10	Brink 5	Estes 3
Lovelace 6	Terhune 4	Neek 3
Wilder 6	Acott 3	O'Brine 3

Here is a line-up of the first twelve on the list:

Lovelance Betsy-Tacy	Clemens. Tom Sawyer
Brink Magical melons	Wilder Little house in the wood
Atwater Mr. Poppers' penguins	De Angeli Bright April
Montgomery Anne of Gree Gables	Farley Black stallion returns
Eastes The M ffats	Knight Lassie-come-home
Lothrop Five little Peppers	Brink Caddie Woodlawn

Canadian Prints

Jacques Gagnier, illustrator of the Children's Book of the S. guenay mentioned by John Fisher on one of his Fall broadcasts, has made silk screen prints of four colorful pictures of French Canada. The set of prints is available from Editorial Associates, Montreal at \$5.00

Books go fishing

The Iceland government gives a grant to all the boats in the fishing fleet for the maintenance of a library abroad. The books are to provide the sailors with guidance in their reading and to give them a chance to study. And of course the entertainment value of books is not neglected either...(Reprint Society of Canada "Crier")

Libraries for all Norwegians

A new Norwegian Library Act, scheduled to go into effect July 1, 1949, will make it compulsory for every Norwegian village and city to establish a free library capable of serving its populace. Minimum standards have been set, with the State matching community appropriations on a graduated scale.

With the law in effect, no Norwegian will be deprived of free reading and reference material. Library Journal, Dec. 15, 1948)

The Case of the Comics

Considerable attention has been given lately to the influence on juvenile conduct of the comics, which are to be found in such variety at every newstand. Articles probing the problem have appeared in different magazines and a broadcast of Citizens' Forum was devoted to it recently.

Objections are raised on the grounds that comics keep their readers from forming good reading tastes and habits. They lead to laziness in reading, and taken as a steady diet-as they often are-they cause a sort of "literary malnutrition". They criticized too from an artistic standpoint: Sterling North, author of children's book, says: "Badly drawn, badly written and badly printed, (they are) a strain on young eyes and young nervous systems. Their crude reds and blacks spoil the child's natural sense of color".

Even more harmful than the low standard of English and the gaudy pictures found in comic books are the unreality, the sensationalism and the crude philosophy of life they present. Parents who try hard to provide a good background for their children find that they become acquainted through comic books with sordid aspects of life that they should not have to meet, at least until they are adult. Nor is supervision and selection by parents always effective. As one mother, a former children's librarian says, "I cannot dictate reading policies to my neighbours' children. Comic books of all types are in the hands of every child in our neighbourhood." (Jean Harker in Library Journal) The actions of many comic book characters seem to be based on a code of violence; both the "bad guys" and the "good guys" attain their ends by the use of force. Dora Carney, writing in the "Saturday Night", claims that this emphasis dulls the individual's humane impulses and makes young people ready to accept leaders who gain power by killing those opposed to them, provided they explain that they are "bad guys".

The claim that comic books contribute to juvenile delinquency by picturing the details of crimes and the cleverness of criminals is supported by many. Judge Pepperdine of Saint John, who appeared on the Citizens' Forum broadcast from Halifax, gave the opinion that comic books are a definite factor in juvenile delinquency. Cases have been reported in which young people committed crimes in imitation of crime comics.

Defenders of the comics may be found among child psychologists and educators. Miss Josette Frank of the Child Study Association of America calls the comics "a folklore of today" and states her conviction that "children read the comics because they find in them the adventure for which there are too few opportunities in their own lives." Another supporter of comics says, "The comics may be said to offer the same type of mental catharsis to its readers that Aristotle claimed was an attribute of the drama."

Comics have been endorsed as vocabulary builders and as "bridges to books". Publication of comics with educational content is increasing. Some feature the stories of real-life heroes in such fields as science, education, politics, etc.; others deal with the habits of animals or retell classics and Bible stories. The value of such versions of the classics has been questioned. A columnist in the Charlottetown Guardian writes, "Pupils can now get the story of Robinson Crusoe and Treasure Island in comic books. They look at the pictures and read the drastically abridged story."

Thus they get the story and nothing else. What they miss is the magic and majesty of Defoe's and Stevenson's sentences, the 'literature' embodied in their writings."

The consensus of opinion seems to be that the good aspects of comics cannot outweigh the bad, and that something should be done to counterbalance their detrimental effect.

Publishers themselves have undertaken to eliminate the worst faults of the comic books. On July 1, 1948 the Association of Comics Magazine Publishers announced a code of standards accepted by fourteen publishing houses which have a monthly circulation of fourteen million copies. Provisions of the code are (1) No sexy, wanton comics. (2) No glorifying of crime or details and methods of crime. (3) No scenes of sadistic torture. (4) No vulgar and obscene language. (5) Divorce not to be glamorized. (6) No religious or race ridicule. The public was notified however that improvements resulting from the code might not be evident for some months. Later the Association appointed an advisory committee "to take positive steps toward improving comics and making maximum use of them as a medium of education." Dr. Charles Gosnell, New York State librarian, was named to this committee, which will seek improvement of vocabulary use in terms of age levels of readers, of legibility, art work and accuracy of representations.

To most of those who have considered the case of the comic censorship appears worse than useless, since it would only give to the banned publications the flavor of forbidden fruit. The provision of worthwhile reading matter having an appeal comparable to that of the comics is regarded as a more workable solution. Active public libraries and school libraries are needed, where children can find exciting adventure stories to take the place of the comics. And to bring children into the libraries where they will come in contact with this alternative literature it has been suggested that libraries should even carry the better comics.

Libraries stocked with interesting books are not enough however. Mrs. Harker in her article sounds a call for action by librarians. She says more adequate training for children's librarians is needed; and since such training is lacking in the library schools, children's librarians will have to train themselves. They can visit schools and get help from teachers in acquiring a detailed knowledge of age-grade reading levels; they can read books on child psychology and perhaps find a tutor in dramatic speech and stay up nights reading children's books. When they forge such weapons for themselves "youth's librarians can defeat comics."

Articles on comics:

The problem of controlling the reading of undesirable periodicals literature. Mrs. Austin Bothwell, Ontario Lib. Review, May 1947.
Publishers improve comic books Ruth Emily Smith. Library Jour. N v.15, 1948
Youth's librarians can defeat comics. Jean Gray Harker Lib. Jour. Dec.1, 1948
What's wrong with the so-called comics. Donna Carney. Saturday Night, Nov.13, 1948

News of Libraries

Moncton A little more than ten months after a disastrous fire that destroyed

its original home, the Moncton Public Library reopened in its new location, the former Kirby property on Highfield St., on January 20, 1949. More than 200 persons visited it on opening day and all were favorably impressed by the improved and larger building.

Ground floor rooms in the building have been fitted up to hold adult fiction and non-fiction and reference books, and there is an office for the librarian as well as children's room with separate entrance, storeroom and kitchenette. Later it is expected the second floor will become available to the library and further expansion will be possible. The library now has 10,000 volumes almost all of which have been donated by the public through a drive put on by the Junior Chamber of Commerce.

Since Juen the library has carried on in temporary quarters in the Capitol Theatre building. Library service to the Moncton Hospital was instituted with the I.C.D.E. helping in the distribution of books twice a week.

Mrs. Moore, the librarian, wishes to thank libraries across Canada for many kindnesses-donation of valuable books and the loan of library tools such as Dewey, Cutter, etc.-and the many other people who have given books to rebuild the library's stock.

The Chairman of the Moncton Public Library Board announced recently that the Board will assist in the restoration of the R.C.A.F. library at Goose Bay by sending as many duplicate books as are available. Approximately 10,000 books were lost in the fire which destroyed the recreation hall at the Labrador Air station.

Halifax

Miss Edith Clare, formerly with the Windsor, Ontario Public Library, and Mrs. Burns Adams of Halifax have joined the staff of the Dalhousie University Library.

Miss Lorna Innis has been appointed Library Assistant for the Dramatics Library of the Adult Education Branch of the Dept. of Education.

Miss Patricia O'Neill, a 1948 Library School graduate, has joined the staff of the N.S. Regional Libraries Commission.

The Canadian Book Centre in Halifax was officially opened February 3. Dr. Zukerman, head of the Paris clearing house for UNESCO was present at the opening and was interviewed on CBC News Roundup. Dr. Zukerman told about the survey of library losses and needs made by his office and stressed the need for reference books and scientific and technical works published since 1935.

The Book Centre has received 25,000 books. European libraries receive lists of books available, and from them they request the books they need. The Book Centre has a staff of seven, including two librarians and a linguist.

Reserve, Cape Breton

"In November 1948 the People's Library at Reserve Mines received word from Miss Elizabeth Dafoe, President of the Canadian Library Association, that the Library is to receive a grant of \$350 from the Canadian Federation of University Women. Miss Dafoe, chairman of the C F U W Library Committee, designated the gift as part of a Children's Reading Stimulation project undertaken by the Federation three years ago. The understanding is that the books purchased with this grant will be for the children's division of the library and that a report in the nature of a children's reading study will be presented to the C F U W.

The Children's library in Reserve Mines developed from the People's Library established during the depression years under the direction of Rev. Dr. J.J. Tompkins. The quantity and quality of material available has grown steadily, and the library has grown steadily, and the library has recently expanded greatly under the guidance of Sister Frances Dolores.

Announcement that the work of Dr. Tompkins and Sister Frances Dolores has attracted the attention of the Canadian Federation of University Women is an indication of the importance which this nationally known organization attaches to proper library facilities for children."

Annapolis County

Mr. Peter Grossman, director of the N.S. Regional Libraries Commission and Miss Alberta Letts of the staff of the Library School, University of Toronto, met with the Annapolis Valley District Library Board in December to complete plans for the setting up of a regional library in the county.

It was decided that the central headquarters for the scheme will be located in Annapolis Royal, where the town has provided free rent, light and heat as a contribution to the plan. Libraries will be in Bridgetown, Lawrencetown and Middleton.

It was decided that the central headquarters for the scheme will be located in Annapolis Royal. The plan will be financed jointly by the towns, the municipality and the province. Annapolis Royal has contributed \$405, Bridgetown \$495 Middleton \$600 and the County Council \$300. A regular grant of \$5,000 will be received from the municipal government and the Carnegie Corporation has given \$6000 to help establish the library.

King's County, Nova Scotia

A delegation representing more than 6,000 rural people in some 40 organizations that have endorsed the project appealed to the Municipal Council of King's to enter the regional library scheme and provide an annual grant of about \$4,300. Mr. Grossman gave an explanation of the set-up and estimated cost, and suggested that each municipality should act on its own in setting up libraries, and linking together as the scheme develops. After addresses by other members of the delegation and considerable discussion, the matter was held over until a later session of the Council.

Prince Edward Island

Fourteen branch librarians attended the Convention held at Library Headquarters on Nov. 17 and 18, 1948. Problems of library management and improved service to the public were discussed. Members of the Headquarters staff gave talks on

types of fiction and publicity methods (use of posters, booklists, book displays etc.) and the rural librarians gave suggestions from their experience with these questions.

Films were shown by the regional office of the National Film Board. The first one Books and People which depicts library service in Alabama somewhat similar to the system in P.E.I. was followed by a lively discussion. Other films put on were: Choosing a book to read, and New Chapters, a splendid picture of the various services given by Public Library of London, Ontario. Plans for expanding film service with formation of local Film Councils were outlined by Mr. S. M. McInnis of the National Film Board.

A feature of the meeting was the announcement of winners in the Library Plans contest sponsored by the Library. First place in the contest for the best floor plan of a P.E.I. branch library went to Mrs. Laura MacLean, Montague and Miss Jean Gill, Charlottetown. Second prize winners were Miss Constance Burrows, Summerside and Miss Maud Dyer, Alberton.

A question Box gave the librarians a chance to submit vexing problems anonymously and discussion of the questions brought out many practical suggestions.
